

Do You Hear What I Heard?

Scripture Text: Romans 10:14–17

Introduction

In 1786, an English Baptist named William Carey became concerned with the Church of his time. He questioned the complacency of Christians who thought they were not responsible to tell others about Jesus Christ. Carey pleaded with those who would listen to him that the Great Commission Jesus delivered to His first disciples was still important. One person who heard Carey speak responded by saying, “Young man, sit down; when God is pleased to convert the heathen world, He will do it without your help or mine.” Does that sound familiar? Many Christians today have that same belief. William Carey, who was also a Calvinist, did not agree with that person and went on to become a missionary in India and is known today as the “father of modern missions.”

Do you believe that if God wants to save someone He will do it without you or me? Do you believe that telling others about Jesus Christ is the job of the preacher, the Sunday School teacher, the missionary or the evangelist? Do you believe that the Great Commission was for the early Church but it is not our mission today? Or, do you believe that it really does not matter? One person wrote, “God doesn’t save us just to sit and watch the Sunday show while calling it church. God saves us *from* something (sin), *to* someone (God), and *for* something (mission).” The Church gets the part about being saved from something, and many get the part about being saved to someone, but most of us do not really get the part about being saved for something.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote that all people are sinners separated from God and under His wrath. Paul wrote that people are saved from God’s wrath and declared right with God by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This involves confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God raised Him from the dead. But what is the means by which we receive this faith? What is the process God uses to take an unbeliever and make him or her a believer? God could do it anyway He wants. If He wanted to save people by a lightening bolt from Heaven or a thunderous voice from above, He could do that. He spoke creation into existence. He called a dead man to life by saying, “Come forth”. He can certainly save people without any effort on our part. He does not need us. What we see in this passage is God’s plan for saving the world, and it involves you and me.

Hearing Leads to Believing

Words are powerful! They have the power to transport us through time and space. They have the power to convey profound truth. They even have the power to hurt and to heal. God uses His words to convey a message of hope. God uses His message to bring about faith. God uses messengers to deliver His message. It is a process.

Romans 10:14 ¹⁴ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*

There are three questions in this verse:

- How can you call on Jesus Christ unless you believe Him?
- How can you believe in Jesus unless you hear about Him?
- How can you hear about Jesus unless someone tells you about Him?

We already know that one must call upon Jesus by confessing Him as Lord in order to be saved. In order to call upon Jesus, though, you must first believe in Him. There must be faith. In order to have faith in Christ, you must first hear about Him. I need to know about Christ before I can believe in Him. In order to believe anything, you must first hear about it. And, in order to hear about something, someone needs to tell you about it. Something must be said in order to be heard. It is a process. So it is with salvation.

If you have accepted Christ, think about your own experience when you accepted Him? Most likely, someone or several people first told you about Jesus. Someone explained to you the Gospel message and the way to repent of sin and turn to God. At some point, you believed what you heard and maybe someone else, or the same person, led you to confess Christ and accept Him as your Lord and Savior. Therefore, God uses the spoken words of the Gospel to awaken the faith of people and to compel them to call upon Jesus Christ. God could use any method He wants to save people. He could speak from Heaven, “Believe in my Son.” He could snap His divine finger and save everyone on the planet. He could paint a beautiful picture in the sky showing the riches of Heaven or even the torments of Hell to motivate people to accept Him. Instead, He chooses to use the spoken word for people to hear it and believe it and then respond to it. That is the process God chooses to use, but it involves another element — you!

Preaching is Everyone’s Responsibility

Did anyone accept Christ without someone else telling about Jesus? I suppose it is possible, but God’s plan is to use His people, the Church, to tell others about Jesus Christ. One person wrote, “Repentance results in a changed life with a missional focus that leads us to call others to repentance.” This means that if we have turned from sin and have accepted Christ, our Savior, we will be compelled to call others to do the same. Paul spoke about our part in calling people to Christ in this passage.

Romans 10:15 ¹⁵ *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”*

Calling upon Christ involves believing in Him. Believing in Christ involves hearing about Him. Hearing about Christ involves someone telling about Him. And telling about Him means someone was sent to proclaim Christ. God’s process of salvation involves calling, believing, hearing, speaking, and going. God sends His Church to the lost people of the world to proclaim a message of hope. God does not say, “Just wait here on Sunday morning and I’ll send people to you.” The Church’s mission is not for us to show up for worship every Sunday morning expecting people to come to us. Worship is

what we do together as the Church, but our mission is to go to people in our daily lives and speak the Good News of Jesus Christ as we have the opportunity.

Someone will read this verse and say, “This says ‘preach’ so it must be the preacher’s job to do this.” That word “preach” means to tell someone something, to announce something, or to make something known. This preaching is not just the preaching of someone behind a pulpit. It is not a pastor’s responsibility to preach the good news — it is the Church’s responsibility to proclaim the Gospel to an unbelieving world. Jesus gave the Great Commission to *all of His disciples*, not just some of them. He also told *the whole Church* to be witnesses of Him throughout the world. You do this on the telephone. You do this in the grocery store. You do this at the hair salon. You do this while on an airplane. Telling others about Christ does not have to be some formal event where you give a well rehearsed speech in hopes of convincing someone to accept Jesus Christ. D.T. Niles said, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.” You simply tell someone else about the hope you have in Christ.

In this verse, Paul quoted the prophet Isaiah about how beautiful are the feet of people who bring good news. This good news is the kind that announces salvation. Later in the same passage from Isaiah, the prophet also wrote the following:

Isaiah 52:10 ¹⁰ *The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

God is a missionary God. He has been a missionary God since mankind first sinned and rejected Him. God has been pursuing us, drawing us, bringing us into His family. The ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God, and you are part of that process. You are the chosen instrument that God uses to bring salvation to those who are perishing. The Great Commission was given to Jesus’ disciples for them to make more disciples. Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? If you are, what should you be doing? Jesus told us to go, not stay or tell others to come. We say we serve Jesus, but are we going for Him or are we just waiting for others to show up? Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not for professional Christians (if there is such!), but for every follower of Christ. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you are called and sent to share the hope you have with others. What are you doing about that?

Obedience is Necessary

Hearing the Word of God is not enough. It is necessary, but just hearing it does not bring someone closer to God. The truth of God’s Word may be proclaimed faithfully to people and not one person is changed. Does that mean God’s Word failed? No! Does that mean you failed? No! God sent the prophet Jeremiah to speak His Word to His people and told Jeremiah that they would not listen. William Carey went to India in 1793 and did not see the first convert until seven years later. How many times might Carey have felt like a failure? How many times might he had doubted his call or God’s Word to change lives? The one who hears the message, even the Word of God, must respond. And so, we see in this passage that something more than hearing is required.

Romans 10:16–17 ¹⁶ *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”* ¹⁷ *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

I used to think this passage said faith comes by hearing the Word of God, but that is not what this passage says. Hearing comes *through* the word of Christ! For one, it is a specific message that must be heard to produce faith. It is the message of Jesus Christ. Secondly, hearing comes *through* the Word of Christ, but not everyone who hears it will respond. Something has to happen in that person for them to respond to the Gospel. God takes the message of the Gospel and by the power of the Holy Spirit, awakens the faith of the unbeliever. It is like Jesus calling Lazarus from the dead. God says, “Come forth”, and the dead is made alive. God brings to life a dead person who then hears the words of life, believes it, and then calls upon Christ to be saved. While God uses us to proclaim the Gospel, it is not our job to convert people. You can faithfully declare the Gospel so convincingly and it still fall on “dead” ears. No matter how well we proclaim Christ, we are not the ones who change people. We are the messengers. The Holy Spirit is the One Who convicts. You just obey God and speak His Word and leave the work of convicting people to Him. If people accept the truth of God’s Word, they accept Him, not you. If people reject the truth of God’s Word, they reject Him, not you.

The appropriate response to hearing the words of God is not to just hear it, but also obey it. This means we submit ourselves to the truth of God’s Word. We hear it. We believe it. We obey it. Just about all of us can hear words, but not all of us obey those words. A parent may tell a child to do something, but he may choose to do what he wants to do. The child may choose to disobey what he was told to do. Paul quoted the prophet Isaiah again in this passage asking who has believed the Gospel. Not everyone who hears the Gospel will believe it. Why? Simply put, they do not obey it. They may hear the words being spoken, but they do not obey the message. They do not hear their need. They do not obey the call for repentance. Are you hearing God? Are you obeying Him? Maybe you think that it is enough to wait for Jesus. Maybe you think your duty is to just show up. Is that what God expects? No! God expects His people to be going and telling. He has sent each of us to this world to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ so that He can call more dead people to life. Are you doing that?

Conclusion

In closing, this passage shows us four important truths about salvation: (1) People will call on Jesus to save them only if they believe he can do so; (2) Belief in Christ requires knowledge about Him; (3) One hears about Christ only when someone proclaims the saving message; and (4) The message about Christ will not be proclaimed unless someone is sent by God to do so. That is why Paul was so urgent about spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He believed that the only way to be saved was to hear and believe in the Gospel. Are we so urgent?

Just about all of us want to see the Church grow. Growth will happen when we come together. Growth will happen when we grow in our own love for the Lord and our love for

each other. Growth will happen when we seek to save the lost. Who have you told about Jesus this week? To whom have you shared the hope you have in Christ? Who have you invited to church this week? God is still working and He is still in the saving business. Are you? God's plan of salvation involves you and me, but we have to be willing and obedient to Him. Do you want others to know Christ? If so, what are you doing about it?

The hymn "Take My Life and Let it Be" is a prayer for God to use us. Look at these beautiful words and ask yourself, "Is this my heart?":

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee.

May it be. Amen!